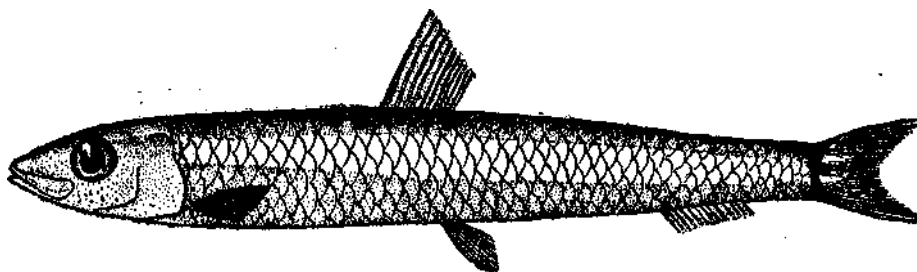


**FURTHER NOTES ON *SPRATELLOIDES DELICATULUS* (BENNETT)
AS A TUNA LIVE-BAIT FISH WITH A RECORD OF *S. JAPONICUS*
(HOULTUYN) FROM THE LACCADIVE SEA**

IN a previous note (Jones, 1960) mention was made of the collection of *Spratelloides delicatulus* (Bennett) from the vicinity of Bitra and Agathi in the Laccadive Archipelago recording for the first time its occurrence in Indian waters. Also in view of its shoaling behaviour and the habit of getting attracted to light the possibility of its utilization as a live-bait for the oceanic skipjack, *Katsuwonus pelamis* (Linnaeus) was indicated.

Subsequently the fish was collected from the lagoons and reefs around Minicoy, Chetlet and Kiltan, in the Laecadives showing its wide distribution in the Laccadive Sea. The language in the nine of the ten inhabited islands is Malayalam and here the fish is known as *choorai-chala* meaning tuna sardine (*choorai*=tuna ; *chala*=sardine). The local name is significant being self-explanatory, clearly indicating that the inhabitants are aware of the predilection of tuna towards it as food. On enquiry it was reported that the tuna follow shoals of *S. delicatulus* and feed voraciously on them in certain seasons especially during the south-west monsoon. It is reported to enter the lagoons in large numbers when it is caught by the local people for their consumption. In the island of Minicoy where Mahl dialect is spoken this fish is known as *rahi* and is used as a bait fish whenever available. It is reported to enter the lagoon just before the monsoon period and remain there till the close of the monsoon and therefore its utilization as a bait fish is restricted to the fag end of the tuna season.



Spratelloides japonicus (Houttuyn) from the Laccadive Sea (By Mr. K. L. K. Kesavan).

Examination of the recent fish collections from the Laccadive Sea has revealed the presence of *Spratelloides japonicus* (Houttuyn) from Minicoy where it appears to be much less abundant than its congener. Both the species have the same local name. Mr. Mohamed Sayeed, Field Assistant who recently collected fish specimens from a number of islands in the Laecadives, has informed me on enquiry that he has come across this fish at Chetlet and Kiltan where it is called *bayi-chala* (*bayi*=outer zone of the reef ; *chala*=sardine). There are however no samples of this fish in the collection brought by him.

S. japonicus has a fairly wide distribution in the Indo-Pacific and has been known from Red Sea, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Lord Howe Island and Polynesia (Fowler, 1941) and from Ceylon (Munro, 1955). This appears to be the first record of the fish from Indian waters.

A brief description of *S. japonicus* based on the material examined from the Laccadive Sea is given below and a specimen 52.7 mm. in length is figured here.

D. ii, 10-11; A. iii, 10; about 38 to 40 scales in lateral line + 3 or 4 scales at base of caudal, predorsal scales 12-13; gill rakers 12-15 + 24-28 on upper and lower limbs of the outer gill arch respectively. A few of the important body proportions expressed in thousandths of the standard length are as follows. Head 226-255 ; snout 79-93 ; diameter of eye 59-70 ; predorsal distance 461-495, and preanal distance 785-807 in standard length.

As both *S. delicatulus* (Bennett) and *S. japonicus* (Houttuyn) are known to occur in Indian waters, the following key is given to facilitate their field identification.*

- (a) Sides of body with distinct silvery white lateral band ; total scales in lateral line generally 40-44 ; anal with 13 rays. *S. japonicus* (Houttuyn)
- (b) Sides of body devoid of silvery white lateral band; total scales on lateral line generally 35-38 ; anal with 9 to 10 rays——*S. delicatulus* (Bennett)

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• It may be mentioned in this connection that *Spratelloides malabaricus* (Day, 1873 *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.*, 240; W8, *Fishes of India*, 648, pi. CIXI. fig. 5) rightly belongs to the genus *Stolephorus* Lacepede and is therefore not included here.